

Turn Back to Summer

Lida L. Greene

ISSN 0003-4827

No known copyright restrictions.

Recommended Citation

Greene, Lida L. "Turn Back to Summer." *The Annals of Iowa* 38 (1965), 79-80.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.7772>

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

a record on individual rights which is unique among the states. It is important that Iowans become sufficiently aware and proud of this fact to ensure its perpetuation.

TURN BACK TO SUMMER

by LIDA L. GREENE

No one needs to tell you it is summer. Iowa summer! The corn is climbing into the sky; noons are hot and still, and chirping sparrows tattoo the silence. You look at a road map and wonder if you and the family can get away for a week-end at Backbone State Park. (Of course you can, Mister! Remind Martha to round up the sleeping bags.)

Now if you are driving through Des Moines on your way to the park you will want to visit the Iowa Historical Building. There is something for everyone: Civil War swords for a man who knows the dates of Shiloh and Manassas, Iowa City glass for the lady, Le Grand crinoids for a budding geologist. If it is a Friday you might want to search in Census Division and Historical Library records for great-grandpa who came to Jackson County in 1850. (Note: For your park outing, take along the scuba gear. That's one thing great-grandpa didn't have.)

Since we are talking about vacations and feeling a little sorry for grandpa, let's look in on the new Iowa, 1849. One Major William Williams came up the river that May in the *Kate Karney*. Mississippi traffic was flourishing. Boats were crowded with German immigrants via the port of New Orleans and the big news was Asiatic cholera. He rode from Keokuk to Bloomington (Muscatine) by stage and west to Tipton for a viewing of some land brother Joseph (The Hon. Joseph Williams, Chief Justice, Iowa Supreme Court) had bought. It must have been dull. No motels with swimming pools, no hamburger shops, no historic markers. He heard axe and hammer in burgeoning towns, watched movers' wagons crawling the horizons, saw

prairies shimmering in the sun. He busied himself with pencil and pen so he would not forget.

... I think the prairie called Green Bay Bottom is the most beautiful sight I have ever seen. Everywhere the green was giddy with color . . . flowers of deep red / yellow / Purple & White — wish my friends at home could enjoy the Sight. . . .

Williams made a later voyage to Ft. Snelling, Minnesota Territory. His journal, apt with description and sketch, is a panorama in miniature of the changing frontier. Home again, he carefully listed the assets and liabilities of all the states he had seen in the West and he gravely wrote:

... take it all through, Iowa is decidedly the best State for uniform richness of Soil beauty of Scenery Water and health 'tis in my Opinion destined to be the greatest Agricultural State in the Union. . . .

The journal of Major William Williams, edited by H. M. Pratt of Fort Dodge, was published in the *Annals of Iowa*, in April, 1920. The original is in my desk as I write, presently on loan for microfilming from Susan Atwell of the Williams clan. Major Williams was to stake his future on that 1849 estimate of the new state. He would become sutler at a frontier fort, founder of Fort Dodge, friend and patron of the Indian, leader in the troubled years of the Spirit Lake and New Ulm massacres.

(So Junior's lost his sleeping bag? So what? It's warm, isn't it? A couple of blankets and the boy can bunk in the back of the station wagon.) Wait now! You're not in that much of a hurry. Why not think about adding Fort Dodge to your Iowa vacationing this year. Their new Fort Williams is something to see. See it, of course, on your way to Des Moines and the Historical Building.

Copyright of *Annals of Iowa* is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.